



# Flathead County

## Planning & Zoning

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## MEMO

To: Flathead County Planning Board

From: Allison Mouch, Planner II

Date: February 1, 2012

RE: 2012 Draft Growth Policy Update

Dear Planning Board members,

The Flathead County Growth Policy was originally adopted by the Board of Commissioners on March 19, 2007 by Resolution No. 2015A. The document was created following the content requirements and processes set forth in Section 76-1-601 of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA). Pursuant to 76-1-601(2)(f)(iii), one of the stated requirements of a Growth Policy is the establishment of a timetable for reviewing the document a minimum of once every five (5) years, and revising as necessary. In accordance with this section of MCA, as well as the implementation strategy laid forth in Chapter 9 of the Growth Policy itself, a completed draft of the Flathead County Growth Policy update has been submitted to you for formal consideration. Provided below is a detailed review of the public process followed as part of the 2012 Growth Policy update.

Part 6, Chapter 9 of the Flathead County Growth Policy states *“At a minimum of every five years, the Planning Board shall prepare a draft revised Growth Policy. The revised Growth Policy should include updated existing characteristics and projected trends. Market fluctuations, environmental events, shifts in custom and culture, and all other changes in the community should be documented. Goals and policies should be revised as needed to accurately reflect the present day needs of Flathead County. New techniques needed to implement goals and policies should be included. Implementation techniques no longer relevant or not appropriate should be eliminated.”* In order to meet the intended five (5) year review timeline, discussion regarding how best to tackle the Growth Policy update began in earnest mid-2010. The update process was anticipated as part of the Planning Office’s 2012 Strategic Work Plan, as reduced staffing levels coupled with the time and resource commitment anticipated made advanced planning for staff assistance a necessity.

Prior to any formal work commencing on the update, the full Planning Board agreed to hold a public forum to hear directly from members of the community what they liked, did not like or what

needed to be re-evaluated or changed as part of the Growth Policy update process. The Board agreed to hold a public workshop on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010 beginning at 6:00 PM in Conference Rooms A & B of the Earl Bennett Building, to take public comment on what should be included in or addressed as part of the Growth Policy update (reference Planning Board minutes from September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010). A press release was prepared to alert community members of the workshop date, time and location; an article on the workshop appeared in the Daily Interlake leading up to October 20<sup>th</sup>.

Approximately twelve (12) individuals attended the workshop on October 20<sup>th</sup> to speak on topics related to the Growth Policy update. General sentiments from community members who chose to participate indicated a desire to maintain the Growth Policy in its current state and not ‘dilute’ the content of the document itself (reference DVD minutes recorded October 20, 2010; written summary of comments included with materials). Following the workshop, Planning Board Sub-Committee ‘A’ held a public meeting (November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office conference room) to discuss the public comment received at the workshop and begin developing a work plan and timeline for the Growth Policy update process. It was discussed and decided that the work plan, if agreed upon by the full Planning Board, would be forwarded to the Flathead County Commissioners for formal review and approval, in order to effectively begin the update process (following MCA and Chapter 9 of the Growth Policy).

Based upon input received from members of the public, the work plan developed by Sub-Committee ‘A’ was broken into three separate phases set to occur over the course of the year; this was intended to allow the Board to focus on specific topics brought to light following the public workshop. The content of the work plan, divided into each respective phase, has been outlined below:

- **Phase 1**
  - Review and update *Chapter 5: The Flathead Economy*, adding a section on economic development;
  - Develop a “User’s Manual” for the Growth Policy document.
- **Phase 2**
  - Create a chapter on sand and gravel resources as required by statute;
  - Discuss and potentially incorporate a “Property Owner’s Bill of Rights”.
- **Phase 3**
  - Update all data, figures, maps and information throughout the Growth Policy document;
  - Incorporate recently adopted plans, as well as text approved by the Commissioners on how to start a new neighborhood plan.

Following the completion of all three phases, it was anticipated the draft Growth Policy document would be ready to begin the formal review process before the Flathead County Planning Board and County Commissioners, with April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 as the established goal for adoption of the updated document.

Sub-Committee ‘A’ presented the draft work plan to the full Planning Board during the regular Planning Board meeting on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010 (reference Planning Board minutes for December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010; discussion under ‘Committee Reports’). It was decided that the full Board would convene twice monthly, beginning in January 2011, and hold public workshops to review and edit

text, as well as hear public comment on the topics identified in the work plan. The efficient use of both planning staff and Board members' time was discussed at length; as a result, the Planning Board agreed that the 2012 Growth Policy Update would focus specifically on the elements identified by the public and set forth in the work plan. In this regard the Growth Policy would undergo a focused and stream-lined 'update', as opposed to a broader and lengthier 'revision'. At the conclusion of the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, a motion was made to forward the Growth Policy work plan, as proposed, to the County Commissioner's for consideration; the motion passed unanimously.

On Thursday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010, BJ Grieve discussed the Growth Policy work plan during his monthly meeting with the County Commissioners. During this meeting it was suggested a formal resolution be drafted for consideration. The resolution and work plan were formally discussed by the Commissioners as an agenda item on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010; it was decided that formal action on the work plan and guidance on moving forward with the Growth Policy update process would not occur until 2011, giving deference to the new Commissioner entering office. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011, Commissioners Lauman, DuPont and Holmquist met to once again review the proposed work plan and approve Resolution No. 2015P, requesting the Planning Board move forward with the proposed update(s) to the Flathead County Growth Policy. The motion to approve the resolution passed unanimously on a vote of 3-0.

A six (6) step public process is laid out in Part 2 of Chapter 9 of the Growth Policy, which details the procedure that should be followed when creating – and logically, when updating – a planning document in Flathead County. The passage of Resolution No. 2015P, which directs the Planning Board to begin the Growth Policy update process, serves to meet the requirements of **Step 1** of the public process, which calls for guidance from the Planning Board and Commissioners. Steps 2 through 6 have been similarly met as follows:

**Steps 2 and 3** of the 6-step process are almost indistinguishable with regard to the Growth Policy update. The requirement to hold 'scoping meetings' was initially met with the publicly noticed workshop held by the Flathead County Planning Board on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010, which led to the creation of the Growth Policy Update work plan. However, during the course of 2011 there were twenty-one (21) public workshops held by the Planning Board to discuss proposed edits to the Growth Policy document, and to hear comments and suggestions from members of the public related to the proposed edits or other elements of the Growth Policy identified in the approved work plan. Following each set phase identified in the update process, the Planning Board held a "Checkpoint" workshop to review all the proposed edits relevant to that phase and to once again encourage public participation and comment on the draft document.

**Step 4** of the process was met when the compiled draft Growth Policy update was considered as a "New Business" item by the full Planning Board during their regular meeting on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012. During this meeting the Board decided to schedule a public hearing date to formally review the draft document on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The completed draft update was posted on the Flathead County Planning and Zoning website on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012, over forty (40) days prior to the public hearing date. A press release was sent on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012 alerting the public to the hearing date, time and location, as well as how to obtain copies of the draft update online, in person, or via email.

Legal notice of the Board's consideration of the draft Growth Policy update appeared in the January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 edition of the Daily Interlake and is currently advertised on the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office's website calendar.

**Steps 5 and 6** will be completed through the public review of the document by the Planning Board and County Commissioners, respectively. A public hearing to review the proposed draft is set for February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012; should additional workshops be necessary, a second public hearing by the Planning Board on a revised draft document will be scheduled at a date and time to be determined. Once the Planning Board has completed their review of the document and made a formal recommendation to the County Commissioners, the Commissioners may establish additional time in which the public may comment on the draft document prior to formal consideration and a final decision.

### **Summary**

In summary, the draft Growth Policy update has followed the public process identified in Part 2 of Chapter 9 of the Growth Policy, which is based upon guidance for review timelines established in 76-1-601 M.C.A. The Flathead County Commissioners approved a formal resolution requesting the Planning Board complete an update of the Growth Policy following a vetted work plan based upon input received from members of the Flathead community. The Planning Board has completed this task over the past year by holding public workshops, engaging the press and following the established work plan approved by the Commissioners; the result of this effort is the draft Growth Policy Update that has been submitted for formal consideration on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Based upon compliance with the review process set forth in statute, as well as compliance with the work plan approved, it would be appropriate for the Flathead County Planning Board to consider a making a formal resolution recommending approval of the draft update to the Flathead County Commissioners.